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McLeod, Doris G., and First, Ramona K.

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A twelve week course in typewriting was prepared for foreign students who met university level requirements in this country but were deficient in English language skills. Fifteen experimental students who completed the course were compared with a control group. The uniformity of the statistical results in favor of the experimental group over the control group led to the conclusion that typewriting instruction can be used effectively as an aid to the learning of English as a foreign language. At the same time a useful skill can be gained.

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Summary

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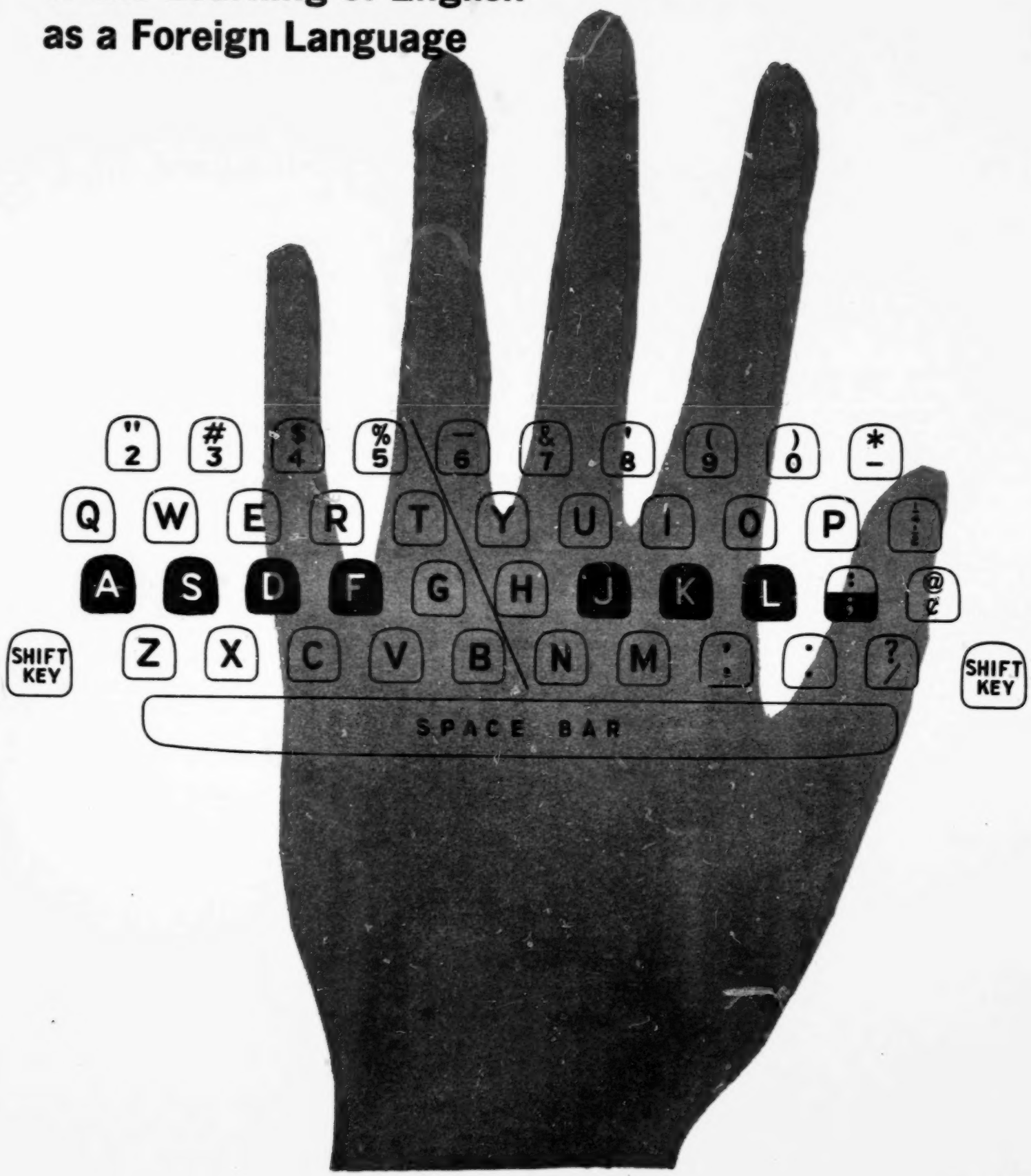

Doris G. McLeod and Ramona First
San Francisco State College
San Francisco, California

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Title:	TYPEWRITING INSTRUCTION AS AN AID TO THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
Investigators:	Doris G. McLeod and Ramona K. First
Institution:	San Francisco State College 1600 Holloway Avenue San Francisco, California 94132
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TYPEWRITING INSTRUCTION AS AN AID TO THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

BACKGROUND

Many foreign students coming to the United States for advanced study are handicapped because their English language proficiency proves to be inadequate for classroom conditions where English is the language of instruction. A problem for the students and for the schools is the need to impart a working knowledge of English as quickly and as economically as possible, in order that foreign students may enter the regular courses and attain their educational objectives in the United States.

If typewriting instruction could be used effectively as part of a program for teaching English as a foreign language, the foreign students who completed such a program would have the useful skill of typewriting in addition to the increased English language proficiency of their total English language program. Further, if typewriting instruction were found to aid foreign students in learning English, there would be implications that additional experiments should be made with typewriting instruction using special methods and materials as adjuncts to programs for remedial or rehabilitation language learning.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to test the hypothesis that typewriting instruction could be used as an aid to the learning of English as a foreign language.

Stated operationally, the hypothesis was that the mean gain in achievement in English for a group of foreign students receiving typewriting instruction as part of a program in English as a foreign language would be significantly greater than for a group not receiving such typewriting instruction, each of the two groups receiving the same total number of hours of classroom instruction in English as a foreign language.

The objective included the development of usable typing skill for foreign students in a beginning typewriting class and the application of that skill to typewriting problems involving the use of English as a foreign language.

PROCEDURE

To test the hypothesis that typewriting instruction could be used as an aid to the learning of English as a foreign language, a classroom experiment was designed and procedures were established.

The experiment was conducted with the students of the American Language Institute at San Francisco State College. This Institute provides a special program for foreign students who need remedial work in English before entering regular college programs. Twelve weeks of intensive English language training are provided for foreign students who have met requirements for college entrance at San Francisco State College or some other institution of higher learning in this country, but who do not have sufficient command of English to enroll in regular college courses. The classes which comprise the curriculum of the American Language Institute are: reading, pronunciation, language laboratory, structure, writing, speech, vocabulary, American culture, and pattern practice. (Pattern practice is practice directed to establishing language patterns as subconscious habits.)

Thirty students, the entire enrollment of the American Language Institute at San Francisco State College for the 1964 spring semester, were involved in the experiment. Three English language precourse tests were administered and scored by the staff of the American Language Institute in accordance with its usual procedure. Other data concerning individual students were obtained from a questionnaire, from direct questioning, and from the student record folders.

The students were ranked on the basis of the means of their scores on the three precourse language tests. Assignment of individual students to experimental and control groups of 15 students each was made on the basis of mean scores on the three tests, taking into consideration the native language of the student, the expected exposure to English language usage outside of the classroom, and the undergraduate or graduate scholastic standing of the student. Ten different native languages were represented.

The experimental and control groups completed the regular 12-week program of the American Language Institute and were exposed to the same number of the classroom periods of instruction in English as a foreign language. The special typewriting instruction was given to the experimental group for three periods a week while the control group had an equivalent three periods a week of English pattern practice without typewriting.

The students in the experimental class knew that the typewriting instruction was planned as part of their program in English as a foreign language.

The typewriting instructor was aided by a full-time experienced classroom assistant. This made it possible to observe each student and give individual instruction in stroking techniques and typewriter operating procedures. Such individual instruction was necessary because the students had such a low level of comprehension of spoken English that the usual classroom demonstration

techniques could not be effective--yet these students were quick to learn when shown what to do and how to do it, on an individual basis.

Specially prepared typing text material was used including keyboard location drills. The special typing lessons which followed keyboard presentation were planned to give practice in typing from straight copy and to introduce typing techniques. They also provided practice in English language patterns, and practice in composing in English. These lessons were coordinated with the lessons in the textbooks used by the American Language Institute. No attempt was made to restrict syllable intensity or to avoid new or difficult stroking patterns.

It was the intent to have each typing lesson challenge the student's ability to use the English language patterns he was practicing in the other American Language Institute classes. At the same time, he was practicing typing and learning the techniques of operating a typewriter. Each student was allowed to proceed from one lesson to the next at his own rate, and repetitive practice was required only on the parts of a lesson which gave him difficulty either in typing or in English usage.

At the end of the 12-week ALI program, the postcourse English language tests were administered and scored by the Institute staff in accordance with its usual procedure. The precourse and postcourse tests yielded scores which could be compared statistically.

The final step in the experiment was the statistical treatment of the data. The primary data were the precourse and postcourse English language test scores obtained by the standard testing procedures of the American Language Institute.

Analysis of covariance was the principal statistical method used, because

of the impossibility of direct control of all variables in the design of the experiment.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Since the precourse scores measured initial levels of ability to use and understand English as a foreign language, the postcourse score averages were adjusted for precourse levels in evaluating the increased facility in English attained by the experimental group compared to the control group. The adjustment was made statistically by the analysis of covariance, using the precourse scores as the independent variable. The adjusted mean scores for the two groups were compared to test the hypothesis that the experimental group---- which had typewriting instruction---had made significantly greater gains than the control group which took the standard American Language Institute course-- without typewriting instruction.

Statistical comparisons of final test scores, adjusted for differing levels of ability, showed a consistent pattern of superior scores made by the experimental group.

The adjusted mean scores for the experimental group on the three precourse and postcourse tests were significantly greater than those for the control group at the 5 percent level of significance.

The possibility that the factor of language background of the student, or the factor of the degree of exposure to English language usage outside of class during the semester, may have been more favorable to the experimental than the control group was studied statistically. These factors appear not to have influenced the significance of differences in means found on the test instruments.

Two other factors which may have influenced final test scores could not be quantified. One of these was the degree to which the student was motivated to learn English. The other was the amount of time each student may have spent outside of class hours in an effort to improve his English proficiency. In the judgment of the staff of the ALI and the experimenters, these two factors did not have an appreciable effect upon the statistical significance of the results.

In the special typewriting class the goal of 25 to 30 words a minute was met or exceeded by all but 3 of the 15 students. This degree of skill was considered compatible with the academic and personal-use needs of the students, and was attained without emphasis on skill building per se.

The uniformity of the statistical results in favor of the experimental group over the control group leads to the conclusion that typewriting instruction can be used effectively as an aid to the learning of English as a foreign language.

IMPLICATIONS

1. Further studies are desirable to explore the uses of the typewriter as a learning aid.

2. More research should be done as to the uses of content in typewriting text material for teaching subject matter and beginning typewriting in the same one-semester course.

3. The same type of study as reported here should be done with foreign students having a common language background; for example, the individuals in the experimental and control groups would all be Japanese studying English as a foreign language.

4. The same type of study as reported here should be done with American students who need to improve their English proficiency.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

There are seven references listed in the final report.